Socialist Worker
Gateaux Strike Special

Management forced onto the defensive

AFTER eight weeks of strike, Gateaux workers forced a substantial climbdown from the company.

Originally Gateaux management had sacked five bakers and demanded further compulsory redundancies, cuts in differential payments and speed-ups.

They refused to negotiate the sacking of the five bakers and threatened to close the factory if their plans were not accepted. They went to court and injuncted the strikers from picketing their own workplace.

But last week they had softened their stance. They offered to reinstate four sacked bakers (the fifth has retired); to continue the differential payements and allow for negotiated, voluntary redundancies.

This came at a time when strikers and supporters had collected a magnificent £3000 from working class people during a day of action in Dublin.

The strength of the solid strike and the refusal of Gateaux workers to be intimidated by closure threats, letters to their homes and court injunctions forced the company to moderate its aggressive stance.

Gateaux workers, however, voted two to one to reject the company proposals. In particular they would not accept the 25 redundancies demanded now and a further 12 later. Acceptance of the company's "survival plan" would involve a massive deterioration of conditions for the workers in the factory.

The mood of the strikers is as strong and determined as ever to stand up management bullying.

Managers had said two weeks ago that the factory would close come what may as vital customers had been lost. They added they were only attending talks with the union "out of courtesy".

Yet within a week they were saying that this lost custom could be won back. And even after rejection by the workforce of their latest proposals, they indicated that further talks mightt still be possible.

Gateaux workers have shown by their strength and determination that the company can be beaten and the tide of union-busting in the industry can be turned round.

Step up the action!

IN order to turn management's defensive position into a victory for the workers the action must be stepped up.

Unfortunately the associated Lyons Tea plant in Inchicore is still working. Although money has been collected in the factory from the workers—mostly members of SIPTU—it is necessary to build greater support there.

Gateuax strikers must win the argument with Lyons workers that they have a common interest in fighting their same boss—the Allied-Lyons combine. With the coming of 1992 and the single European market, bosses are putting the boot in to attack workers' conditions and even union organisation.

In recent months we have seen a spate of such management attacks of workers in Waterford Glass, the Irish Press, Ryanair and now Gateaux.

Companies that operate across Europe are preparing plans to reorganise production in different countries where they can get the lowest pay, the most docile workers and the biggest profits.

Allied-Lyons will scarcely leave union organisation, jobs, wages and conditions intact in Inchicore if they can smash them in Finglas. At the very least they will attempt to use the Lyons distribution network for cake products if they manage to close the Finglas plant. Workers in Inchicore must make it absolutely plain that this will not be allowed to happen.

The Gateaux strike committee must organise the leafleting of Lyons Tea workers taking up the arguments necessary to convince workers there to join the strike—if only for a token half-day stoppage in the first place. And plans should be made for picketing the Inchicre plant to argue with the workers there for this support.

Let them eat cake!

THE company makes frequent use of the poor mouth in dealing with its workers but its balance sheet tells a different story.

Gateaux is controlled by the British based Allied Lyons Group. In 1989 it reported pre-tax profits of £561 million.

The Irish operation is Allied Lyons holdings which control Lyons, Gateaux, Gateaux Northern Ireland and Tetley Tea. Despite management claims to the contrary this is avery profitable operation.

The *Irish times* of 12th June 1989 reported "Lyons making pots of money". Profits last year rose by 12.3 per cent to reach six and a quarter million pounds.

Much of this profit is derived from Lyons domination of the £40 million tea market in Ireland.

Gateaux cakes is also a profitable concern.

And payments and benefits of Allied-Lyons Holdings directors in Ireland more than doubled in four years from £63,000 in 1985 to £155,000 in 1989. Plenty of money for some!

And they have political influence too. Many Gateaux workers were surprised last month when local Fianna Fail TD Sean Barrett attended a support rally in Finglas and said he was fully behind the strikers.

He went on to urge strikers not to break the law. This was rather silly as the rally was outside the factory from which the strikers had been banned by Court injunctions obtained by the company. If they had followed his advice all the workers would have had to go home and abandon their picket!

Gombeen man Sean also forgot to mention that his pal in the Fianna Fail party Eoin Ryan was a non-executive director of the firm!

Ryan—a prominent Fianna Fail behind the scenes man—was a FF TD from 1973 to 1981.

A scratched record

Gateaux management threats to close the factory are beginning to sound like a scratched record. They have been regularly made in the last few years.

Two examples: In 1980 the company forced through a flexibility plan claiming the plant would close otherwise. And again in 1985 the threat of closure was used to cut the number of tea breaks from three to two.

You'd think they'd have the imagination to try another pitch!

Solidarity forever

Support from other workers has been magnificent. For example workers in Waterford Glass within a few days of returning to work after their strike took up a collection for Gateaux.

Money has been collected in packards and local Finglas factory Unidare has a weekly collection for the strikers.

Last week's day of action with collections around Dublin gained more than £3,000. Workers in other workplaces should take up collections for the strike and send delegations to visit the picket line in Finglas.

Socialist Workers Movement

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